

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /075 W

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R 130250Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4638

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3814

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJ: INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS: FIRYUBIN'S VISIT AND

GUJRAL'S APPOINTMENT AS INDIAN AMBASSADOR

REF: NEW DELHI 3380

SUMMARY: THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED MAR CH 11 THE APPOINTMENT OF UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR PLANNING GUJRAL AS AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW. BOTH SOVIET AND INDIAN SOURCES HAVE PRIVATELY DOWNPLAYED DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER FIRYUBIN'S SIX-DAY VISIT HERE LAST WEEK. MRS GANDHI HAS REPORTEDLY NOT DECIDED WHEN TO GO TO MOSCOW DESPITE A PLETHORA OF RECENT RUMORS HERE THAT SUCH A VISIT HAS BEEN SCHEDULED. END SUMMARY.

1. CONVERSATIONS THIS WEEK WITH SEVERAL COMMUNIST

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DIPLOMATS AND THE MEA SOVIET DESK OFFICER LEAD US TO

CONCLUDE THAT DEPUTY MINISTER FIRYUBIN DID NOT HAVE A SINGLE OVERRIDING PURPOSE IN VISITING INDIA LAST WEEK. A SOVIET EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY TOLD US MARCH 10 THAT FIRYUBIN HAD NO SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE INDIANS AND HIS TALKING POINTS COULD BE SURMISED AT LEAST IN PART BY LOOKING AT BREZHNEV'S AND KOSYGIN'S COMMENTS RELATING TO INDIAN AND SOUTH ASIA IN THEIR 25TH PARTY CONGRESS SPEECHES. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN MOSCOW HAD NOT SENT ITS OWN PEOPLE TO DELHI SINCE THE BREZHNEV VISIT (NOVEMBER 1973), AND THEREFORE FIRYUBIN AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR FILLIPOV OF THE SOUTH ASIAN DIVISION (WHOM HE SAID ACCOMPANIED) CAME TO BRIEF THEMSELVES ON SUBCONTINENT AFFAIRS. HE THOUGHT THE INDIAN PRESS ATTACHED MORE SIGNIFICANCE TO FIRYUBIN'S TALKS THAN THE FACTS JUSTIFIED.

2. THE MEA SOVIET AFFAIRS OFFICER ALSO DOWNPLAYED THE VISIT WHEN WE INQUIRED MARCH 11. HE FELT THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF FIRYUBIN'S SOUTH ASIA SWING WAS TO DISCUSS THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT WITH SRI LANKAN OFFICIALS. HE IMPLIED THE DELHI AND ISLAMABAD STOPS WERE ADDED AS AFTERTHOUGHTS, AND SAID FIRYUBIN'S TALKS HERE WERE ESSENTIALLY COMPLETED ON MONDAY MARCH 1. HE THEN DECIDED TO PROLONG HIS STAY TO PAY A COURTESY CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO ONLY RETURNED FROM SEVERAL DAYS IN WEST BENGAL LATE MARCH 3. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON FIRYUBIN'S MARCH 4 CALL ON MRS GANDHI BUT PRESUMABLY HER LONG-AWAITED VISIT TO MOSCOW WAS DISCUSSED. RUMORS IN DELHI THE PAST WEEK HAVE BEEN INSISTING SHE IS GOING SOON. BOTH THE SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY AND THE MEA OFFICIAL INDICATE, HOWEVER, SHE HAS STILL PROVIDED NO PRECISE DATE YET AND THE LATTER TOLD US HE PERSONALLY DOUBTED SHE WOULD GO DURING THE CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET SESSION, WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO RUN UNTIL MID-MAY. THE SOVIET ONLY COMMENTED THAT "INDIANS DO NOT PLAN FAR AHEAD."

3. A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHAT FIRYUBIN DISCUSSED IN DELHI HAS YET TO EMERGE. THERE IS AGREEMENT THE BANGLADESH SITUATION WAS REVIEWED BUT BOTH THE SOVIET CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBOFF AND THE MEA OFFICIAL DENY INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER SEN (IN DELHI FOR CONSULTATIONS DURING THE PERIOD OF FIRYUBIN'S VISIT) TOOK PART IN THE TALKS OR MET THE SOVIET DEPUTY MINISTER. (THE SOVIET EMBOFF IN PASSING ASKED FOR OUR VIEWS ON BANGLADESH, SAYING THAT "ONLY YOU AMERICANS ARE TOLD WHAT IS GOING ON THERE". THE SOVIET POLITICAL COUNSELOR HERE HAS PREVIOUSLY INDICATED TO US HIS FEELING--OR FRUSTRATION--THAT THE

AMERICANS IN DACCA ARE FAR BETTER INFORMED THAN THE SOVIETS). INDO-PAK RELATIONS, THE SIMLA PROCESS OF "NORMALIZATION" AND NON-ALIGNED MATTERS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED ACCORDING TO THE MEA OFFICER. THE SOVIET EMBOFF DENIED THAT THE QUESTION OF ROMANIA'S CANDIDACY AS AN OBSERVER TO THE NON-ALIGNED SUMMI AROSE, BUT THE ROMANIAN DCM HERE HAS EXPRESSED HIS SUSPICION TO US THAT FIRYUBIN RAISED THE MATTER AND OTHER OBSERVERS FEEL SOVIET CONCERN ABOUT ROMANIAN, AUSTRALIAN AND PORTUGUESE AFFILIATION WITH THE MOVEMENT WAS CONVEYED TO THE INDIANS. ECONOMIC/TRADE MATTERS WERE SAID TO HAVE BEEN TREATED ONLY marginally, MAINLY BECAUSE FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER PATOLICHEV IS COMING TO DELHI AND THE JOINT ECONOMIC AND PLANNING COMMISSIONS ARE MEETING IN MOSCOW SOON (NEW DELHI 3622 NOTAL).

4. IT WAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNED MARCH 11 THAT I.K. GUJRAL, UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR PLANNING, HAS BEEN APPOINTED AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW (NEW DELHI 3507 NOTAL). A BIO REPORT WILL BE SENT BY SEPTTEL. GUJRAL HAS LET A BRITISH HICOMM OFFICIAL UNDERSTAND HE WILL ARRIVE IN MOSCOW IN LATE APRIL. THE MEA OFFICIAL WITH WHOM WE SPOKE MARCH 11 COMMENTED MERELY (AND UNENTHUSIASTICALLY) THAT GUJRAL HAD APPARENTLY BEEN TO THE SOVIET UNION ONLY ONCE, AS HEAD OF A DELEGATION TO A MOSCOW FILM FESTIVAL JULY 1973. SOVIET AMBASSADOR MALTSEV'S ELEVATION TO FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE DREW NO COMMENT FROM THE SAME OFFICIAL BUT THE SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY SAW IT AS EVIDENCE OF THE GROWING IMPORTANCE THE SOVIET UNION ATTACHES TO TIS RELATIONS WITH INDIA.
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